



Profile of Gang Members in Suffolk County

**Prepared By
The Suffolk County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
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Background

Gangs have existed in the United States since the 1800s. However, in the 1980s, youth gangs increased in urban areas, and sharply declined throughout the late 1990s. Beginning in 2001 and continuing until 2005, there was another sharp increase in the numbers of gangs, and then a leveling off since 2005. The 2009 National Youth Gang Survey ¹ found larger cities exhibited a large and stable prevalence rate of gang activity from 2005 to 2009, while the less populated areas reported a smaller rate with a more fluctuating pattern.

¹U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Highlights of the 2009 National Youth Gang Survey June 2011 , <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/233581.pdf>

Definition of Gang²

There is no single, generally accepted definition of a “gang.” State and local jurisdictions tend to develop their own definitions. The term “street gang” is often used interchangeably with “youth gang” as well as “criminal street gang,” with the latter explicitly denoting the element of criminal activity found almost universally in gang-related legislation (see Compilation of Gang-Related Legislation). However, the term “street gang” carries two specific meanings that increase its practical value. First, it suggests a common feature among gangs: they often have a street presence. Street socialization is a key feature of adolescent gangs (Vigil, 2002). Second, this term also refers to “street crimes,” that is, serious crimes that occur on the streets and that often are of concern to citizens and policymakers, including rape, robbery, aggravated assault, gun crimes, and murder.

The following criteria are widely accepted among researchers for classifying groups as gangs (Decker and Curry, 2003; Esbensen et al., 2001; Klein, 1995b; Miller, 1992; Spergel, 1995):

- *The group has three or more members, generally aged 12–24.*
- *Members share an identity, typically linked to a name, and often other symbols.*
- *Members view themselves as a gang, and they are recognized by others as a gang.*
- *The group has some permanence and a degree of organization.*
- *The group is involved in an elevated level of criminal activity.*

Findings from the National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) show that law enforcement agencies report group criminality to be of greatest importance and the presence of leadership of least importance in defining a gang in their view (National Youth Gang Center, 2009, see Defining Gangs and Designating Gang Membership).

² <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ>

Community Conditions³

Gangs tend to cluster in high-crime, socially disadvantaged neighborhoods (Thornberry et al., 2003). Gangs become established—or “institutionalized”—when core social institutions function poorly, including families, schools, and economic systems (Moore, 1998; Vigil, 2002). Moore (1998) outlines four community conditions that often precede this transition. First, conventional socializing agents, such as families and schools, are largely ineffective and alienating. Under these conditions, conventional adult supervision is largely absent. Second, the adolescents must have a great deal of free time that is not consumed by other prosocial roles. Third, for a gang to become established—if not fully institutionalized across generations—members must have limited access to appealing conventional career lines, that is, good adult jobs. Finally, the young people must have a place to congregate—usually in a well-defined neighborhood.

Major Risk Factors for Gang Membership⁴

Risk factors that predispose many youths to gang membership are also linked to a variety of adolescent problem behaviors, including serious violence and delinquency. The major risk factor domains are individual characteristics, family conditions, school experiences and performance, peer group influences, and the community context. Risk factors predictive of gang membership include prior and/or early involvement in delinquency, especially violence and alcohol/drug use; poor family management and problematic parent-child relations; low school attachment and achievement and negative labeling by teachers; association with aggressive peers and peers who engage in delinquency; and neighborhoods in which large numbers of youth are in trouble and in which drugs and firearms are readily available (Howell and Egley, 2005; see also Esbensen, 2000; Hill et al., 2001; Thornberry, 1998; Wyrick and Howell, 2004). The accumulation of risk factors greatly increases the likelihood of gang involvement, just as it does for other problem behaviors. The presence of risk factors in multiple risk-factor domains appears to increase the likelihood of gang involvement even more (Thornberry et al., 2003). A complete enumeration of risk factors for juvenile delinquency and gang involvement and data indicators can be accessed at the National Gang Center (NGC) Web site (<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/Strategic-Planning-Tool>).

^{3,4} <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ>

Reasons Youth Join and Leave Gangs⁵

The notion that youth are primarily, if not exclusively, actively recruited into a gang by older members is often circulated in the general public. However, systematic research continuously fails to support this view. Among the various reasons youth give for joining a gang, the following are the two most commonly observed: (1) social reasons—youth join to be around friends and family members (especially siblings or cousins) already part of the gang; and (2) protection—youth join for the presumed safety they believe the gang can afford (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Peterson et al., 2004; Thornberry et al., 2003). Also reported by youth, albeit far less frequently, are more instrumental reasons for joining a gang, such as drug selling or making money. Moreover, few youth, irrespective of race/ethnicity, report they have been forced or coerced to join a gang (Freng and Winfree, 2004; Peterson et al., 2004). In other studies, many adolescents reported they could refuse to join a gang without reprisal (Decker and Kempf-Leonard, 1991; Fleisher, 1995, 1998).

Two other issues that shed light on youths' participation in gangs are duration patterns of gang membership and the ways in which youth accomplish leaving a gang. Longitudinal research that follows the same subjects regularly over a long period of time provides the best measure of membership duration patterns. Only a few studies have examined gang membership longitudinally, but each of these has provided uniformly consistent evidence that youth gang membership patterns are very dynamic—most youth reported being in a gang for one year or less (Gatti et al., 2005; Gordon et al., 2004; Thornberry, 1998; Thornberry et al., 2003). These longitudinal studies were conducted primarily in areas with emerging gang problems, and thus it is unknown how these compelling findings compare with those for chronic or long-standing gang-problem areas, which are more likely to contain multigenerational and/or more hierarchically structured gangs. However, field studies in Chicago (Horowitz, 1983) and Los Angeles (Moore, 1991), where these types of gangs are more likely to exist—some of which are intergenerational—provide some evidence of more long-term patterns of gang membership among youth.

With regard to the second issue, research has documented that former gang members, especially marginal and short-term ones, typically left a gang without complication or facing any serious consequences (Decker and Lauritsen, 2002; Decker and Van Winkle, 1996). However, for more long-term and/or core members, the process of leaving a gang is likely to be more gradual and met with greater difficulty—particularly for youths in more highly organized gangs that have a firmer foothold in a community or neighborhood. Other situational factors that make leaving a gang more difficult include greater dependence on or personal status in the group, continuing perceptions by others (e.g., rivals) that the person is a bona fide member of the gang, and the lack of viable lifestyle alternatives (that is, conventional pursuits such as employment opportunities). Further, more hierarchically structured gangs may threaten or enact certain sanctions for those wishing to leave the gang.

⁵ <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ>

Effective Approaches to Gang Problems⁶

Overreliance on one strategy or another is unlikely to produce fundamental changes in the scope and severity of a community's gang problem (Curry and Decker, 2003; Wyrick and Howell, 2004). Prevention programs are needed to target youths at risk of gang involvement, to reduce the number of youths who join gangs; intervention programs and strategies are needed to provide sanctions and services for younger youths who are actively involved in gangs to separate them from gangs; and law enforcement suppression strategies are needed to target the most violent gangs and older, criminally active gang members. A balance of prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies and programs is likely to be far more effective than any one approach alone (Spergel et al., 2006).

Several effective prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies and programs have been identified in a systematic review (Howell, 2009, pp. 147–162). Ideally, communities should develop a continuum of programs and strategies. For example, the Gang Resistance Education And Training (G.R.E.A.T.) prevention program (<http://www.great-online.org/>) can educate youth on the dangers of gang joining and teach them skills on how to avoid gang membership (Esbensen, 2008), while a multidisciplinary intervention team (Arciaga, 2007) works with active gang members, and targeted (“hot spot”) policing, combined with probation supervision and vertical prosecution, can dismantle gangs and suppress their violent criminal activities (Decker, 2003; Kent et al., 2000).

The Comprehensive Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Model (OJJDP, 2008) is a flexible framework that guides communities in developing and organizing such a continuum of programs and strategies. The National Youth Gang Center has developed an assessment protocol that any community can use to assess its gang problem and which guides development of a comprehensive, communitywide plan of gang prevention, intervention, and suppression (National Youth Gang Center, 2009a). Resource materials that assist communities in developing an action plan to implement the Comprehensive Gang Model are also available (National Youth Gang Center, 2009b). Information on promising and effective gang programs and strategies that address specific risk factors among various age groups is also available at the NGC website in the OJJDP Strategic Planning Tool (<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/Strategic-Planning-Tool>).

⁶ <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ>

Best Practices to Address Community Gang Problems

OJJDP's Comprehensive Gang Model⁷



Five Strategies in OJJDP's Comprehensive Gang Model

Community Mobilization: Involvement of local citizens, including former gang-involved youth, community groups, and agencies, and coordination of programs and staff functions within and across agencies.

Opportunities Provision: Development of a variety of specific education, training, and employment programs targeting gang-involved youth.

Social Intervention: Involving youth-serving agencies, schools, grassroots groups, faith-based organizations, police, and other juvenile/criminal justice organizations in "reaching out" to gang-involved youth and their families, and linking them with the conventional world and needed services.

Suppression: Formal and informal social control procedures, including close supervision and monitoring of gang-involved youth by agencies of the juvenile/criminal justice system and also by community-based agencies, schools, and grassroots groups.

Organizational Change and Development: Development and implementation of policies and procedures that result in the most effective use of available and potential resources, within and across agencies, to better address the gang problem.

Source: Spergel, 1995, pp. 171–296.



The five strategies within the Comprehensive Gang Model have a number of critical elements necessary for the model's success.

⁷ <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/231200.pdf>

Core Strategy: Community Mobilization⁸

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

- *The community, through an appointed steering committee, develops a variety of educational, training, and employment programs or services targeted to gang youth and those at high risk of gang involvement.*
- *Special access to social and economic opportunities in the community is provided for gang-involved youth and youth at high risk of gang involvement.*
- *Opportunities and services are provided in such a way that they do not encapsulate, segregate, or alienate gang youth or those at high risk from mainstream institutions.*
- *Mechanisms for identifying and addressing youth at risk of gang involvement are in place in the elementary, middle, and high schools within the targeted area(s).*
- *Education, training, and job opportunity strategies are integrated with those of social services, particularly youth outreach work, along with close supervision and social control, as necessary.*
- *Local residents and businesses are supportive and involved in the provision of educational and training opportunities and job contacts for targeted gang youth and those at high risk.*
- *Access to social opportunities also is provided to other gang members and associates of targeted youth.*

⁸ <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/231200.pdf>

Core Strategy: Opportunities Provision⁹

⁹ <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/231200.pdf>

Core Strategy: Social Intervention¹⁰

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

- *Youth-serving agencies, schools, grassroots groups, faith-based and other organizations provide social services to gang youth and youth at high risk of gang involvement as identified through street outreach and driven by the problem assessment findings.*
- *Social intervention is directed to the target youth individually and not primarily to the gang as a unit, although understanding and sensitivity to gang structure and “system” are essential to influencing individual gang youth and providing effective intervention.*
- *All key organizations located in the target area are encouraged to make needed services and facilities available to gang youth and youth at high risk of gang involvement.*
- *Targeted youth (and their families) are provided with a variety of services that assist them in adopting pro-social values and in accessing services that will meet their social, educational, and vocational needs. Mental health services are a critical ingredient.*
- *Street outreach is established to focus on core gang youth and later on high-risk youth, with special capacity to reach both non-adjudicated and adjudicated youth.*
- *The primary focus of street outreach services is ensuring safety while remaining aware of and linking youth and families to educational preparation, prevocational or vocational training, job development, job referral, parent training, mentoring, family counseling, drug treatment, tattoo removal, and other services in appropriate ways.*
- *Outreach activities such as recreation and arts are carefully arranged so as not to become a primary focus but a means to establish interpersonal relationships, develop trust, and provide access to opportunities and other essential resources or services.*
- *In-school and after school prevention and education programs such as Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.), anti-bullying, peer mediation, tutoring, and others are offered within the target area(s), as are community programs to educate parents, businesses, and service providers.*

¹⁰ <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/231200.pdf>

Core Strategy: Suppression¹¹

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

- *There are formal and informal social control procedures and accountability measures, including close supervision or monitoring of gang youth by agencies of the criminal and juvenile justice systems, and also by community-based agencies, schools, and grassroots groups.*
- *Gang suppression or control is structurally related to community- and problem-oriented policing and to gang enforcement and tactical units.*
- *Police administration and police officers on the intervention team assume key roles in the development and implementation of important aspects of the program, not only through suppression but through gang prevention, social intervention, and community mobilization.*
- *Gang crime data collection and analysis (i.e., crime analysis) are established to accurately and reliably assess the gang problem and its changes over time. Definitions of gang-related incidents, gangs, and gang members are maintained. Gang intelligence is routinely collected and analyzed. It is also highly desirable to have gang crime data geo-coded and analyzed, preferably using automated “hotspot” mapping techniques.*
- *Police contact with targeted youth is regularly and appropriately quantified, shared, and discussed with other members of the intervention team for purposes of team planning and collaboration. Contacts should be generally consistent with the philosophy of community and problem-oriented policing.*
- *Aggregate-level data bearing on the gang problem are regularly shared with all components of the project, particularly the steering committee.*
- *Professional respect and appropriate collaboration between police and outreach workers and other team members are essential.*
- *Tactical, patrol, drug/vice, community policing, and youth division units that have contact with targeted youth and gang members provide support to the intervention team through information sharing and mutual collaboration and support.*
- *Targeted enforcement operations, when and where necessary, are consistent with program goals and are coordinated with the intervention team to have the maximum impact.*

¹¹ <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/231200.pdf>

Core Strategy: Organizational Change and Development¹²

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

- *Policies and procedures that result in the most effective use of available and potential resources within and across agencies are developed and implemented.*
- *The policies and practices of organizations, particularly of agencies providing intervention team staff, are adapted to conform to the goals and objectives of the project as identified through the strategic planning exercises.*
- *Each program, agency, or community representative on the steering committee ensures that its internal units are cooperating with and supporting the work of the intervention team.*
- *Various agencies learn not only to understand the complex nature of the gang problem and cooperate closely with each other in the development and implementation of the program, but also to assist other organizations, particularly agencies involved with the intervention team, to achieve their respective mission objectives.*
- *In the process of collaboration, a team approach means a maximum sharing of information about targeted youth such that activities of team members are modified in a generalist direction (e.g., police take some responsibility for social intervention and outreach workers assist with the suppression of serious crime and violence).*
- *A case management system and associated data system are established so that contacts and services by all members of the intervention team can be monitored for purposes of effective targeting, tracking youth entry into and exit from the program, and measuring outcomes at individual and program area levels*
- *Staff development and training for the intervention team are conducted for the different types of participants separately and collectively, especially regarding data sharing, joint planning, and implementation activities.*
- *Special training, close supervision, and administrative arrangements are established, particularly for youth outreach workers and law enforcement, to carry out their collaborative roles in a mutually trustworthy fashion.*
- *Organizational policies and practices become inclusive and community oriented with special reference to the interests, needs, and cultural background of local residents, including the targeted youth.*

¹² <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/231200.pdf>

Gangs in Suffolk County: Highlights from the 1999 Study

In 1999, the Suffolk County Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission (a subgroup of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council) released a report entitled, **“Preventing Youth Gang Proliferation in Suffolk County: A Comprehensive Approach”** which documented the level of youth gang activity in Suffolk County. The report provided demographic characteristics and profiles of gang members including the number, size, and type of active gangs documented. The report also provided an overview of effective gang prevention and intervention programs throughout the United States.

Since 1999, numerous studies and reports have become available along with resources for addressing gang problems in communities. The U.S. Department of Justice National Gang Center (www.nationalgangcenter.org) features the latest research about gangs, descriptions of evidence-based, anti-gang programs, and links to tools, databases, and other resources to assist in developing and implementing effective community-based gang prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies.

Since 1996, the National Youth Gang Center has also conducted the National Youth Gang Survey which is based on a nationally representative sample of law enforcement agencies serving larger cities, suburban counties, smaller cities, and rural counties. This survey is done annually and the results and analysis are provided on their website.

According to the Suffolk County Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission’s 1999 report, there were a total of 1,401 confirmed or suspected gang members in Suffolk County. Out of the 1,401 total, 956 or 68% were Suffolk County residents, while 210 or 15% were from outside of the county and 235 or 17% have no known address. At the time, the population of Suffolk County was 1,419,372. The total number of gang members was .01% of the total population. The majority of gang members were male (36 females were identified) and between the ages of 16 and 24.

The report cited eight major gangs and 23 smaller gangs or sub groups of major gangs. The report did not include the specific names of the gangs. Four of the major gangs had 100 or more members and the 36 females were all affiliated with the major gangs.

The report presented an in-depth profile of a small sample of 50 youth gang members. The age range for the gang members was from 13 to 31. The mean age was 19. The racial/ethnic identities were 44% Black, 38% Hispanic, 16% White, and 2% Other. Over half (58%) of the gang members

did not complete high school and 10% lived with both parents. A small number (12%) of gang members reported substance abuse and 34% had a mental health diagnosis.

The types of crimes committed by the gang members included 52% violent crimes, such as robbery, sodomy, assault, criminal possession of a weapon, or animal torture, 22% drug-related crimes, such as criminal possession of a controlled substance or criminal sale of a controlled substance, 16% public disorder, such as criminal mischief, criminal trespass, PINS, disorderly conduct, or harassment, and 10% property crimes, such as petit or grand larceny or criminal possession of stolen property.

GROWTH OF GANGS

Over the past 10 years gang membership in Suffolk County has appeared to rise, although it is still relatively small compared to the total population. In 1999, 1401 gang members were identified, representing only .01% of the population. Ten years later, at the time of the current study, 4103 gang members were identified representing about .029% of the Suffolk County population which has remained relatively constant. Although some of this increase may be attributable to a more concerted effort to identify gang members who come into contact with the criminal justice system, anecdotal evidence from police, probation, and corrections officers in the field suggest an increase in gang activity across the county that is concentrated in a few geographical areas.

This study only represents individuals who were identified as gang members after becoming involved in the criminal justice system; therefore it is possible that the data represents a lower estimate of the number of gang members that are active in communities and schools throughout the area.

Current Study of Gang Members in Suffolk County

Methodology and Purpose

In July 2009 data was collected on all identified gang members from a database maintained by the Department of Probation. The database includes only some basic information, so additional data was culled from the probation case records. This expanded data file includes information from those with confirmed gang membership at the time of the study (N=4103) including:

- Gang Affiliation & Rank
- Age, Gender, Employment, Family History
- City/Town of Residence
- Criminal History (individual & immediate family)
- Substance Abuse & Mental Health History
- History of Abuse

Gang Membership

Four major street gangs account for the majority of gang membership in Suffolk County.

Bloods (including Blood-related splinter groups, e.g., *Braveheart*) accounted for the largest group of gang members (n=1764, 43%). Other major street gangs represented in Suffolk County include: the El Salvadorian gang Mara Salvatrucha or *MS-13* (n=567, 14%), *Latin Kings* (n=466, 12%), and *Crips* (n=433, 11%). Other gangs with significant numbers of members included Motorcycle gangs (n=127, 3%), the prison gang *Neta* (n=117, 3%) and White Supremacist/Skinhead groups (n=62, 2%). Table 1 provides the full list off all identified gangs in Suffolk County. For 116 cases, the name of the gang was unknown or the identified members were 2 or less. The history of the major gangs and the history of the smaller, lesser known, Suffolk County gangs are outlined below.

Table 1. Identified Gangs in Suffolk County

Bloods (includes Braveheart)	Street Gang - National	1764	43%
Mara Salvatrucha (MS13)	South American Street Gang	567	14%
Latin Kings	Street Gang - National	466	12%
Crips	Street Gang - National	433	11%
Other or Unknown	Varies	161	4%
Motorcycle Gangs	Local Motorcycle Gang	126	4%
Neta	Prison Gang	117	3%
White Supremacist/Skinhead	Hate Group - National	62	2%
Gangster Disciples	Street Gang - National	60	2%
South Side Posse	Associated with Bloods	55	1%
Five Percenters	Black Nationalist Group	46	1%
Original Station Soldiers	Local Suffolk County	45	1%
Killa Thugs	Local Suffolk County	36	< 1%
Deuces	Street Gang - National	33	< 1%
Brownz	Local Suffolk County	32	< 1%
18th Street	Mexican Street Gang (LA Based)	12	<1%
All About Money	Street Gang – National	12	< 1%
300 Boyz	Local Suffolk County	11	< 1%
Bully Gang	Local Suffolk County	11	< 1%
Murder District	Local Suffolk County	10	< 1%
Sex Money Murder/ Murda	East Coast Street Gang	9	< 1%
Pinoside	Local Suffolk County	7	< 1%
Da Flock	Local Suffolk County	6	< 1%
Sureno 13	Mexican Street Gang	5	< 1%
Dominican Power	Dominican Street Gang	5	< 1%
Zoe Pound	Floridian Street Gang	5	< 1%
Zulu Nation	National Group	4	< 1%
Latin Mafia	National Group Associated with Latin Kings	3	< 1%
Total		4103	100%

Major Street Gangs

Bloods – originating in Los Angeles, CA in the 1970s, this street gang has proliferated throughout the U.S. in urban, suburban, and rural areas. They are associated with the sale of cocaine and marijuana. Membership estimates as high as 30,000 nationwide, in 123 cities in 33 states.

Crips – historic rivalry with the Bloods, also originating in the early 70s in LA. Membership estimates as high as 35,000, in 221 cities in 41 states. They are involved with the sale of cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana and PCP. The Crips are predominately African-American in membership.

Latin Kings – originating in Chicago, IL in the 1960s, predominately Mexican and Puerto Rican. The original formulation was one of community empowerment for Latinos but is now associated with criminal activity including the sale and distribution of cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, and marijuana. The estimated membership in the U.S. is up to 35,000.

Mara Salvatrucha (MS 13) – originating in El Salvador, this is one of the largest Hispanic street gangs in the world, with up to 50,000 members worldwide, and up to 10,000 in the U.S. MS 13 is associated with drug smuggling (into the U.S.), distribution and sale - primarily marijuana and cocaine.

18th Street - formed in Los Angeles, CA, 18th Street is a group of loosely associated sets or cliques, each led by an influential member. Membership is estimated at 30,000 to 50,000 across the country. In California, approximately 80 percent of the gang's members are illegal aliens from Mexico and Central America. The gang is active in 44 cities in 20 states. Its main source of income is street-level distribution of cocaine and marijuana and, to a lesser extent, heroin and methamphetamine. Gang members also commit assault, auto theft, carjacking, drive-by shootings, extortion, homicide, identification fraud, and robbery.

Gangster Disciples - The Gangster Disciples street gang was formed in Chicago, IL, in the mid-1960s. It is structured like a corporation and is led by a chairman of the board. Gang membership is estimated at 25,000 to 50,000; most members are African-American males from the Chicago metropolitan area. The gang is active in 110 cities in 31 states. Its main source of income is the street-level distribution of cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, and heroin. The gang also is involved in other criminal activity, including assault, auto theft, firearms violations, fraud, homicide, the operation of prostitution rings, and money laundering.

Neta – This is a prison gang originating in Puerto Rico with approximately 7,000 members in the U.S., primarily in the Northeast (36 cities in 9 states). Neta is associated with the distribution of drugs such as cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, marijuana, LSD, MDMA (Ecstasy), methamphetamine, and PCP.

Motorcycle Gangs – Several motorcycle gangs operate throughout the U.S., including the Bandidos, Hells Angels, Mongols, Outlaws, and Sons of Silence. Associated with violent crime, weapons trafficking, and drug trafficking - distribution and sale.

White Supremacist/Skinhead Gangs – Considered domestic terrorist threats. Primary concern is hate crimes targeting racial minorities and other vulnerable groups, but criminal activities also include robbery, drug distribution, and drug sales.

Demographic Profile of Gang Members

RESIDENCE

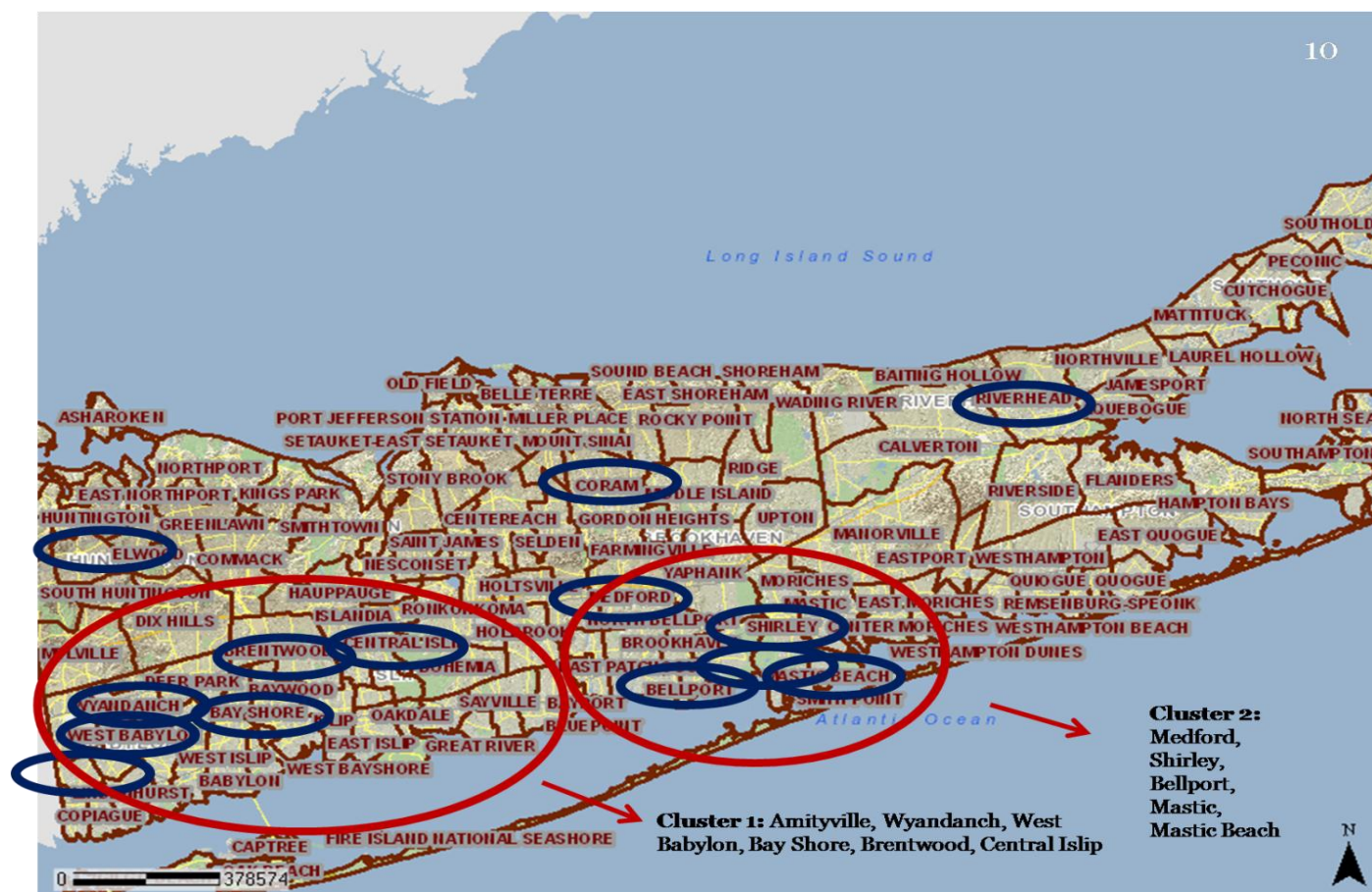
Over 98% of identified gang members resided in New York State and only 1% of these individuals were residing in New York City; the vast majority (99%) was residents of Suffolk County. Gang member residency was represented in almost all towns and hamlets; however, the majority of gang members (n=2362, 65%) were from a few hamlets that tended to be amongst those with the highest rates of poverty in the county.

Table 2 presents the hamlets with the most active gang members (more than 100) at the time of the study. Poverty rates are provided for the towns with the highest gang membership rates. The overall poverty rate for Suffolk County is 5.7%, lower than the State of New York average of 14.2%. However, areas with the higher numbers of gang members are also the areas with higher rates of poverty and unemployment which is consistent with risk factors associated with gang involvement. Figure 1. reveals the geographical clustering of prominent gang activity across the county.

Table 2. Geographical Distribution of Gang Members & Poverty Rates in Area

Hamlet in Suffolk County	Percent of Total Gang Population (n=4103)	Percent of Residents Below Poverty Level
Brentwood	12% (n=475)	11.3%
Bay Shore	7% (n=292)	12.2%
Central Islip	8% (n=342)	11.4%
Huntington Station	6% (n=241)	11.2%
Wyandanch	6% (n=255)	16.4%
Amityville	4% (n=162)	7.5%
Mastic	4% (n=150)	13.0%
Mastic Beach	3% (n=129)	11.3%
Shirley	3% (n=128)	7.8%
Bellport	3% (n=116)	1.6%
Medford	3% (n=116)	2.9%
Coram	3% (n=115)	5.6%
Riverhead	3% (n=111)	13.0%

Figure 1. Geographical Clusters of Gangs Across Suffolk County



Cluster 1 (Amityville, Wyandanch, Bay Shore, Brentwood, Center Islip, and other Babylon Towns) n=1838	Cluster 2 (Medford, Shirley, Bellport, Mastic, Mastic Beach) n=639	Huntington Station n=241	Riverhead n=111	Coram n=115
Bloods (n=759)	Bloods (n=376)	MS13 (n=91)	Bloods (n=81)	Bloods (n=70)
MS13 (n=335)	Latin Kings (n=57)	Latin Kings (n=33)	Crips (n=12)	Crips (n=24)
Latin Kings (n=217)	Crips (n=49)	Bloods (n=31)	MS13 (n=8)	Latin Kings (n=5)
Crips (n=176)	MS13 (n=22)	Southside Posse (n=31)	Latin Kings & Neta (both n=2)	White Supremacist/Skinhead (n=3)

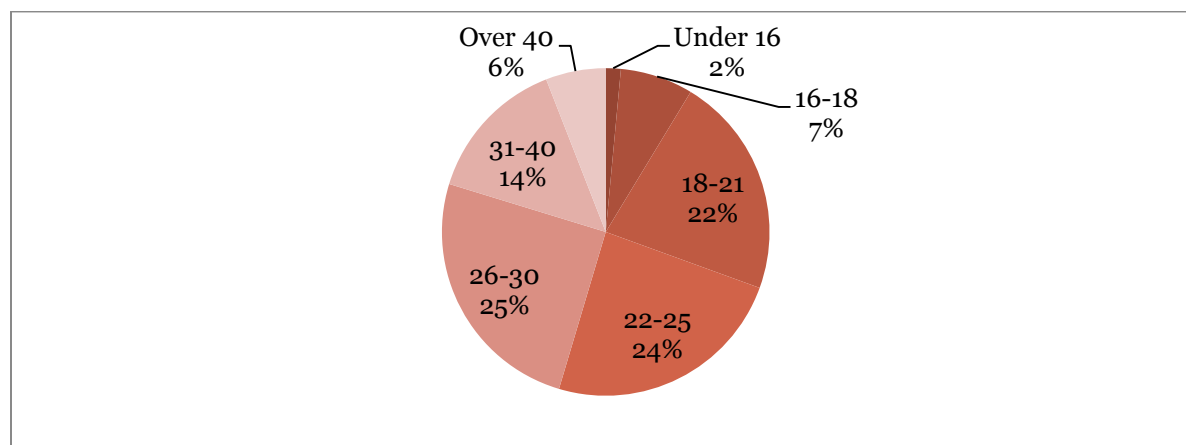
Age & Gender

The majority of identified gang members were young men between the ages of 18-30 (71% of the total). Gang members in this study ranged in age from 14-68 (Mean age, 26; Median age, 24).

Gang members in Suffolk County were predominantly male (94%, n=3851); however, this study found more female gang members (n=259) than did the 1999 study, in which only 2 female gang members were identified. This increase in female gang members identified in this study could suggest a rise in female gang membership, or an increased effort to identify female gang members. A third possibility could be more criminal activity by female gang members leading to involvement in the criminal justice system. Further research would need to be done to investigate these theories. An analysis of the sub-set of female gang members is provided later in this report.

Thirty one percent (n=1309) of the gang members were under 21 years of age, 9% were under 18. Figure 2 presents the percent of ages in each of five categories. An analysis of younger gang members (under 21) is provided on pages 15-16).

Figure 2. Age of Gang Members

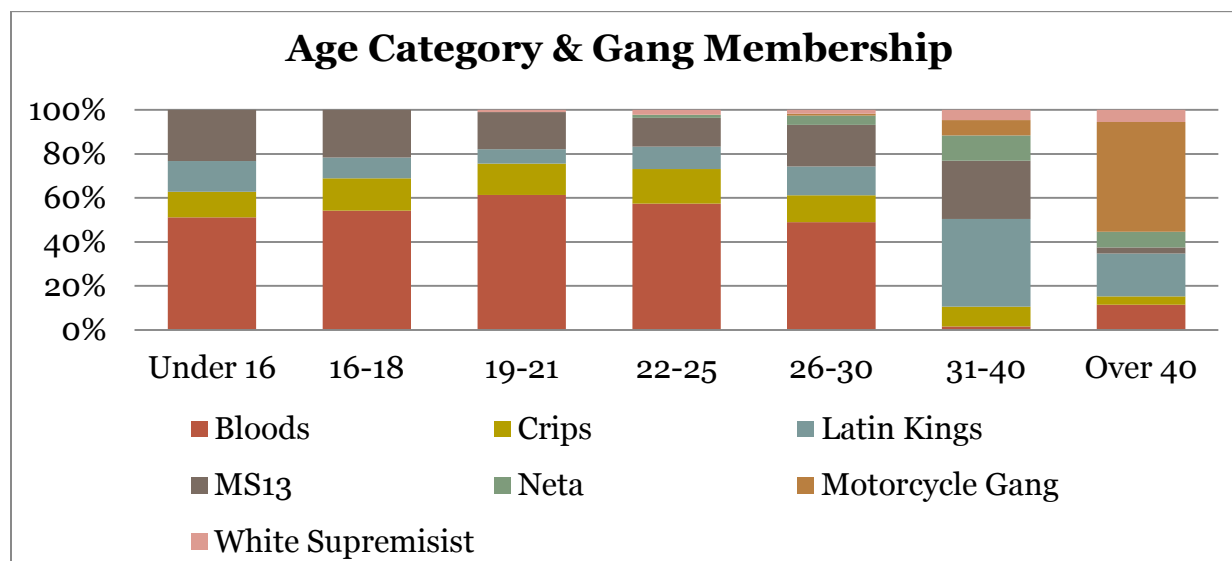


Gang Membership by Age

For younger gang members, membership in street gangs (Bloods, Crips, MS13, and Latin Kings) was most common. Over 50% of gang members under age 30 affiliated with the Bloods.

For older gang members (over age 30), membership in Neta (prison gang), Motorcycle Gangs, and White Supremacist Groups were more common compared to younger gang members.

Figure 3. Age by Gang Membership



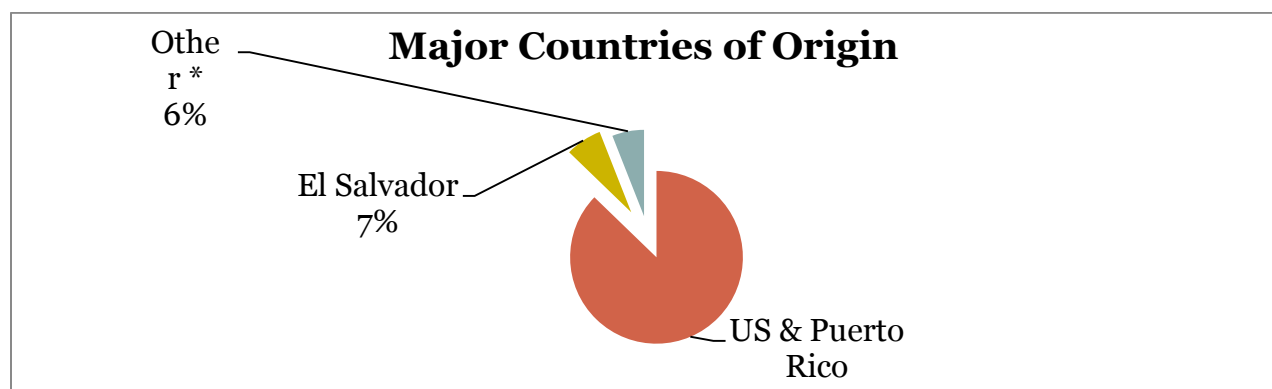
Race

A slight majority of gang members identified as African American (51%), thirty two percent identified as Latino/Hispanic, and 14% identified as White (not-Hispanic). Two percent identified themselves as “Other”.

Country of Origin

The majority of gang members (87%) were originally from the U.S. (including Puerto Rico), 7% were from El Salvador and 6% were from other various countries.

Figure 4. Country of Origin



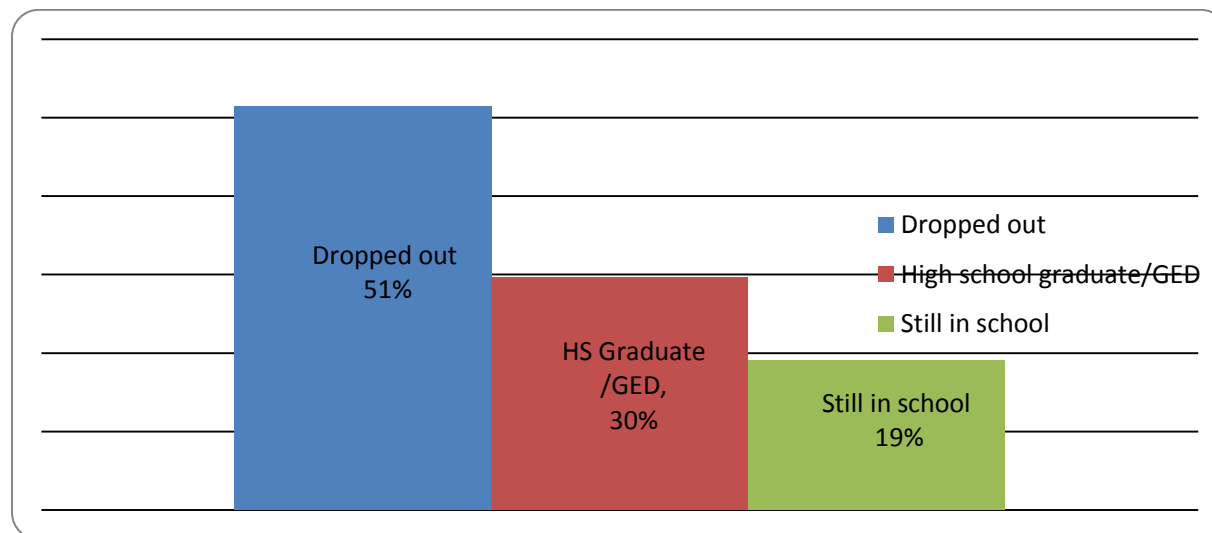
**Other countries of origin included Honduras (n=66, 1.6%), Caribbean Islands (n=49, 1.2%), Other Central/South America (n=108, 2.6%), and Europe, Asia, and Africa (n=22, .5%).*

Education & Employment

EDUCATION

Educational data was available for approximately half (n=2180, 53%) of the gang members in this study. In those cases where data was available, over half of those studied indicated that they had dropped out of High School.

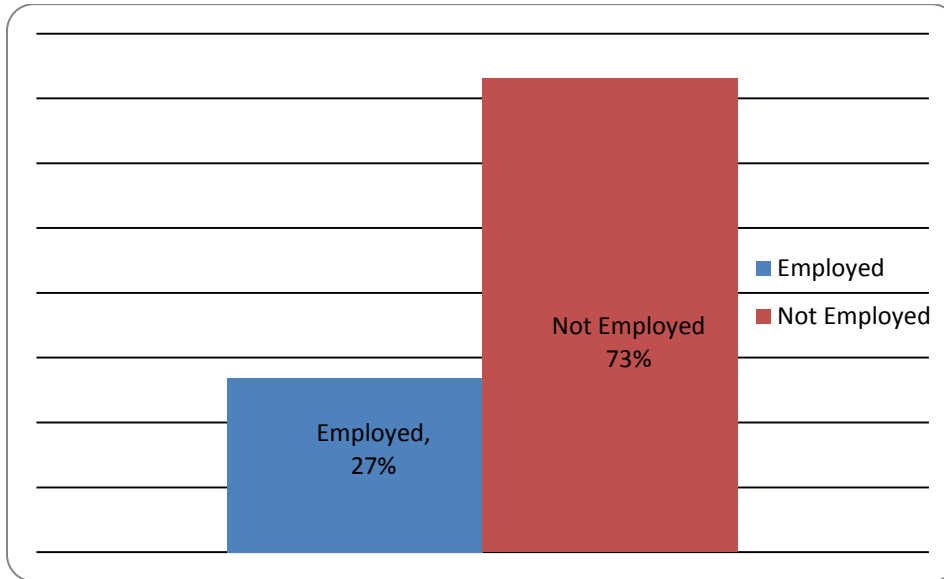
Figure 5. Educational Attainment



EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Employment status was available for 88% (n=3648). Of those studied, only 27% reported being employed in any capacity. About three in four gang members (73%, n=2668) reported unemployment at the time of the study. As this data was self-reported, it is unclear if these gang members obtained income through legal employment exclusively.

Figure 6. Employment Status



Criminal Status of Gang Members

CURRENT CONVICTIONS

All of the individuals identified in this study were involved with the criminal justice system and therefore may have been convicted of a crime. Eighty-eight percent (n=3628) had at least one conviction and 86% had multiple convictions. The average number of convictions was 2.5.

- 88% had at least 1 conviction
- 86% had 2 or more convictions
- 43% had 3 or more convictions
- 30% had 4 or more convictions
- 22% had 5 or more convictions
- 16% had 6 or more convictions

While this study only looked at gang members involved in the criminal justice system, research¹³ has consistently demonstrated that individuals are significantly more criminally active during periods of active gang membership, particularly in serious and violent offenses, and that

¹³ <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ>

prolonged periods of gang involvement have a way of increasing the “criminal embeddedness” of members. “Associates” of gang members also have elevated offense rates.

TYPE OF CRIME

For those with current convictions, the most serious offense was listed as the primary conviction. The most common crime type was violent (25%), drug related (21%), property offenses (15%), and assault (11%). All other offenses accounted for 28% of convictions. The National Gang Center¹⁴ reports that studies of large urban samples show that gang members are responsible for a large proportion of all violent offenses committed during the adolescent years. Somewhat conversely, in less high-risk areas, research has yet to firmly establish that gang members are disproportionately responsible for serious and violent crimes.

DETENTION STATUS

Thirty two percent (32%, n=1322) were currently in detention status (either juvenile detention, jail, or prison), 15% were out of custody (no detention) , 23% had been released on their own recognizance, and 14% had received bail for release.

Family Dynamics

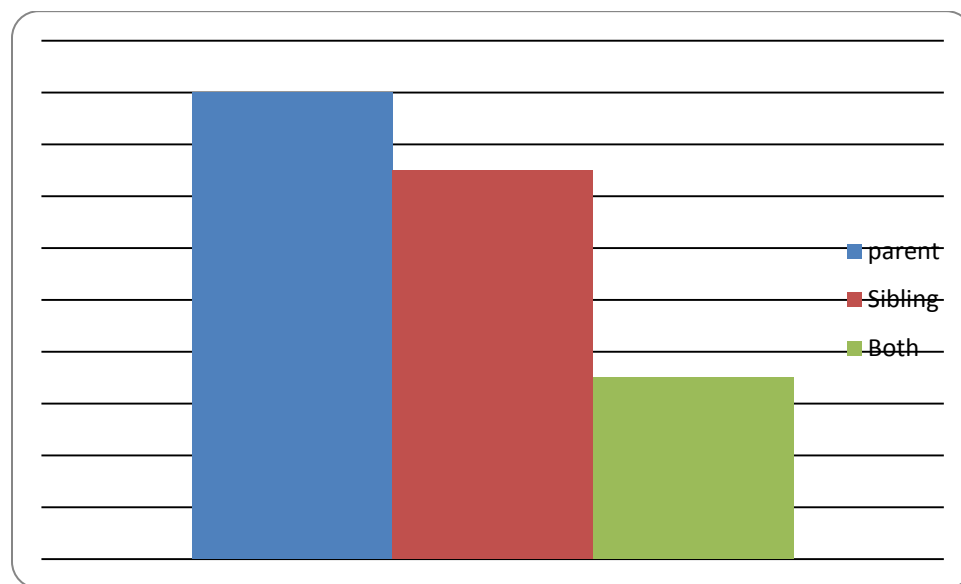
FAMILY STRUCTURE

About 63% (n=2601) of the sample had information about their family structure. Of those, the most common living arrangement was in a home with a single parent (40%), with a spouse or partner (16%), in a two parent family (16%), or with a grandparent or other relative (12%). Six percent indicated that they lived alone, 6% lived with a non-relative/non spouse, and 1% was living in a foster home.

PARENT & SIBLING CRIMINAL INVOLVEMENT

Information on parent and sibling involvement with the criminal justice system was obtained for most of the sample (n=3381). About 18% (608) of gang members had parents with prior involvement in the criminal justice system. About 15% (507) had siblings with prior involvement in the criminal justice system. Of those gang members with family involvement in the criminal justice system, about 65% (n=241) had both a sibling and a parent who was, or had been, involved with the system.

¹⁴ <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ>

Figure 7. Known Criminal Involvement of Family Members

CHILDREN OF GANG MEMBERS

Data on parenthood status was only available for a subset of the population (n=1669, 40% of total). For those who reported or were known to have children, 75% reported being parents to one or more children at the time of the study. For those with children, the average number of children was 2 (range: 1-11).

Although a significant amount of data (60%) was unavailable for estimating the number of parents and their total number of children, the sample identified over 2,500 children of gang involved parents.

Special Concerns

MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSES AND TREATMENT

About 20% (n=687) reported previous mental health treatment, and 10% (n=396) reported a previous or current mental health diagnosis. For those with a diagnosis, the most common were mood disorders (including bipolar and depression, 49%), adjustment disorder (27%) and ADHD (17%). Also reported were anxiety disorders (4%), and psychotic disorders (including schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorders, 3%). Psychiatric medication use was reported for less than 3% of the gang members in this study.

SUBSTANCE USE, TREATMENT, & IMPACT ON CURRENT CONVICTION

Alcohol and drug use (past and current) information was available for 84% of gang members (n=3451). A large number of gang members reported past drug (41%) and alcohol (37%) usage, while a smaller number reported current drug or alcohol use (18% and 19% respectively). About 17% (n=711) reported prior treatment for drugs and alcohol abuse. For those who provided information about drug use, the most common drug was marijuana (70%), followed by cocaine/crack (21%), alcohol (3%), heroin (3%), and “other” (3%).

Drug use was related to the current conviction for about 22% (n=756) of gang members in this study.

Table 3. Past & Current Drug & Alcohol, Past Treatment, & Impact on Current Conviction.

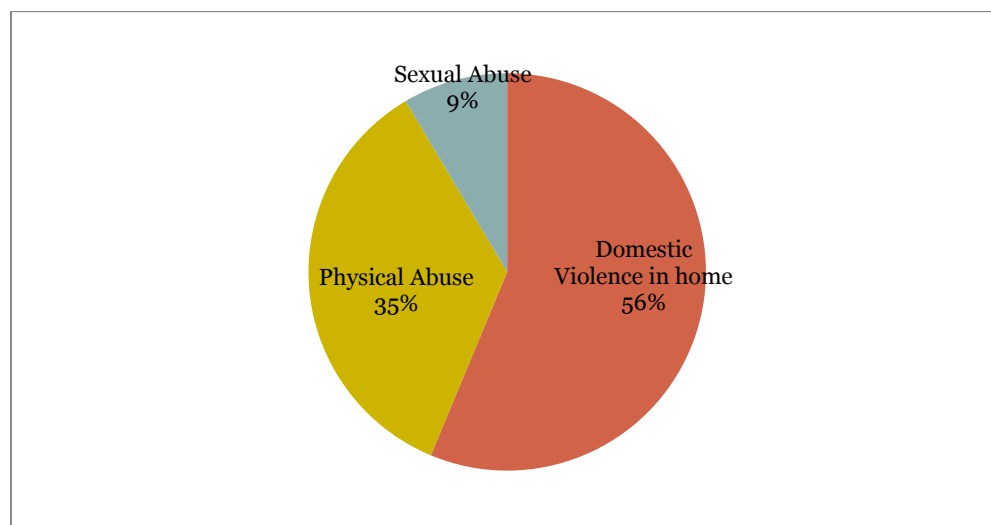
Drug Use	Percent	Alcohol Use	Percent
Past Drug Use	41%	Past Alcohol Use	37%
Current Drug Use	18%	Current Alcohol Use	19%
Prior Treatment (Drug or Alcohol)	17%	Drug use impact on current conviction	18%

SPECIAL EDUCATION

A small percentage 13% (n=453) reported a previous or current special education classification; of these, 317 indicated a diagnosis. The most common diagnoses from this group were: ADD/ADHD (n=110, 35%), learning disability (n=104, 33%), emotionally disturbed (n=62, 20%), and multiple disabilities (n=22, 7%).

VICTIMIZATION

About 10% (n=399) indicated some form of victimization; of this group, the most common was domestic violence (n=218, 5%). Histories of physical abuse (n=142, 4%) and sexual abuse (n=39, 1%) were also reported by gang members.

Figure 8. Of Those with Victimization Reported

Youth Gang Members

DEMOGRAPHICS

About 31% of gang members were age 21 and under (n=1309). Of this group, most (64%) were between 19-21 years old. Ninety-one percent of those in the youthful gang members category were male, and 9% were female; a greater percentage of females were found to be part of the youthful gang members category than the overall gang population (6%).

Young gang members were predominately African American (55%) and Hispanic (29%), 12% identified as White, and 4% as “Other”. Over 90% were from the U.S. or Puerto Rico, 7% were from El Salvador.

Table 4. Age Distribution for Youth (under 21)

Age	N	Percent
14-15	45	3%
16	105	8%
17	131	10%
18	195	15%
19	258	20%
20	274	21%
21	301	23%

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Slightly less than half of youth, 47% (n=340) were still in school, 41% (n=307) had dropped out of school and 13% (n=99) were still in school. Approximately 19% (n=196) indicated having a special education classification – most often Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (41%) or a learning disability (29%).

FAMILY DYNAMICS

About 5% of youth indicated that they had one child (n=64), a small number had two (n=8) or three (n=2) children.

A quarter of the youth had a parent who was involved with the criminal justice system and 17% had a sibling with criminal involvement.

The youth either resided in a single parent household (52%), in a two-parent household (21%), with a grandparent or other relative (12%), alone (2%), or in a foster or adoptive home (2%).

Special Concerns: Substance Use & Victimization

About 20% of young gang members (n=267) indicated past mental health treatment and 13% (n=173) had a current or past mental health diagnosis - most often a depressive disorder (75%) or ADD/ADHD (21%).

Youth reported rates of drug and alcohol use similar to those found in the general gang population. Information on drug and alcohol use was obtained for about 80% of youth – of these, past (18%) and present (42%) alcohol use was quite common as was past (47%) and current (22%) drug use. For those reporting current drug use, marijuana was most commonly reported. For some youth, (15%) their drug use had a direct impact on their conviction.

About 7% (n=94) reported domestic violence in the home, 3% (n=45) reported being victims of physical abuse, and less than 1% (n=12) indicated sexual abuse.

Female Gang Members

Two hundred and fifty nine female gang members were identified (259, 6% of total). Although a small population when compared to male gang members, this number is considerably higher than it was at the last gang assessment in 1999, when only 2 females were identified.

The National Youth Gang Center¹⁵ reports that while law enforcement agencies report an increase in the number of gangs with female members, overall, the percentage of female gang members remains very small. Though they share many similarities with male gang members, female gang members have some notable differences. The National Youth Gang Center¹⁶ cites a number of specific studies of female gang members that describe how roughly one-third of all gang members are female, but that females leave gangs at an earlier age than males. In addition, gender-mixed gangs are also more commonly reported now than in the past. Newer research has also documented that the females in all- or majority-female gangs exhibited the lowest delinquency rates, and males and females in majority-male gangs exhibited the highest delinquency rates.

COMPARISON OF FEMALES TO MALES ON DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The following tables present a comparison between male and female gang members on key demographic, criminal, and family characteristics.

Table 5. Demographic Comparison Females vs. Males

Characteristic	Females	Males
Median Age (Range)	22 (14-60)	24 (15-68)
% in Bloods	56%	41%
% Employed	20%	27%
% Black	48%	51%
% Hispanic	23%	33%
% White	25%	14%
US Nationality	95%	86%

¹⁵ <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ>

¹⁶ <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/FAQ>

Table 6. Type of Crime Comparison, Females vs. Males

Characteristic	Females	Males
% Violent Crime	19%	26%
% Drug Related Crime	21%	20%
% Property Crime	22%	15%
% Assaults	11%	11%

Table 7. Family Dynamics & Education

Characteristic	Females	Males
One or more children	30%	39%
Parent criminal history	25%	17%
Sibling criminal history	21%	14%
Reside in single parent home	41%	40%
Still in school	30%	18%
Dropped out	41%	52%
HS/GED	29%	30%
Special education label	11%	11%

SPECIAL CONCERNS: SUBSTANCE ABUSE & VICTIMIZATION

Males and females were very similar in past and current alcohol and drug use with females having slightly higher rates of past alcohol and current drug use. Table 8 below shows the comparison between males and females on substance abuse and victimization measures.

Table 8. Special Concerns: Substance Abuse & Victimization Females vs. Males

Characteristic	Females	Males
<u>Past</u> alcohol use	44%	38%
<u>Past</u> drug use	43%	42%
<u>Current</u> alcohol use	19%	19%
<u>Current</u> drug use	16%	19%
History of Drug/Alcohol Treatment	14%	18%
Drug use impact on current conviction	15%	19%
Ever treated for Mental Illness	30%	20%
Victim of Domestic Violence	10%	5%
Victim of Physical Abuse	5%	3%
Victim of Sexual Abuse	4%	<1%

Future Directions

This report represents one more step in the Suffolk County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council's efforts to promote communication, collaboration, education, system-wide planning, and decision-making among local juvenile and adult criminal justice agencies and local government. The CJCC assists agencies and local government to gain a better understanding of crime, crime related problems, and effective crime prevention and treatment programs within the juvenile and adult criminal justice system. This report helps to provide a more detailed account of gang membership attributes and hopefully can lead to more effective efforts to prevent, reduce and eliminate gang activity.

The CJCC will continue to help facilitate the planning and implementation of effective programs within the County and will also help to evaluation the gang programs and initiatives reflecting effective prevention, intervention and suppression efforts.

Gang Information Resources

National Gang Center

The National Gang Center Web site features the latest research about gangs; descriptions of evidence-based, anti-gang programs; and links to tools, databases, and other resources to assist in developing and implementing effective community-based gang prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies.

Website: www.nationalgangcenter.gov

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

- ***The Model Program's Guide*** is designed to assist practitioners and communities in implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention programs that can make a difference in the lives of children and communities.

Website: www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/

- ***OJJDP's Gang Reduction Program*** is designed to reduce gang activity in targeted neighborhoods by incorporating a broad spectrum of research-based interventions to address the range of personal, family, and community factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency and gang activity. The program integrates Federal, State, and local resources to incorporate best practices in prevention, intervention, and suppression.

Website: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/antigang/index.html>